

K-619

Circa 1900

Asbury United Methodist Church, Chesterville Forest

Near Chesterville

Private

The present, circa 1900 building of Asbury Methodist Church appears to be the second building of one of the oldest black congregations in the county, though the first building was not located on the Chesterville Forest Road site. Martenet's 1860 map of Kent County shows an "African M. E." church on the old site, located west of Chesterville north of a sharp bend on the old Chesterville-Morgnec road. The move was made because the center of the black population in the Chesterville area had shifted after the Civil War. Whereas before the war most of the area blacks lived and worked on farms around the village of Chesterville (until about 1848 called New Market), after the war they moved from the farms (though continuing to work there) and bought their own small plots of land where it was available, i.e. in the tracts considered unsuitable for farming, often heavily wooded and poorly drained. The distance between the new community and the old church was more than two miles, felt to be too far for convenient, regular walking. Few community residents at the turn of the century had any other kind of transportation. Moving the church also would foster its being a focus for community life, important during the period in which segregation kept blacks from numerous other places. The building itself is a very simple expression of the vernacular Gothic Revival style. Both in form and materials used (though many are now covered), it was a typical example of a small, rural, frame, three-part church of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Kent County.



# 7. Description

Survey No. K-619

|  |                                       |   |   |                        |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|------------------------|
| <b>Condition</b>                         |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                            | <b>Check one</b>                          |                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent       | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered          | <input type="checkbox"/> original site    |                        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved | date of move           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair            | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |   | <u>Circa 1900-1910</u> |

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Asbury Church is a small, gable-roofed frame church located in the rural black community of Chesterville Forest southeast of Chesterville. It is not entirely covered on the exterior with vinyl siding. Sited with its entry gable-end facing and close to the public road (which has caused it to be struck several times), it is built in the prevalent three-part late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century form: Vestibule-tower centered on the entry gable end of the main or nave section, and with a shallow rear projection at the ceremonial end of the building. This three-bay deep church is somewhat unusual in the construction of its vestibule-tower and belfry. Instead of rising higher than the main section's roof, as was most commonly the case, the tower's roof is continuous with that of the main section, and the small, separate belfry with its own gable roof sits atop the tower roof. The belfry is now enclosed with the new siding, and there are now no openings in the vestibule-tower except on the entry level. The church is said to have been built about 1900 in another location, west of Chesterville, and moved to the Chesterville Forest site not long thereafter. There is no cemetery on the church lot, but the old Chesterville Forest Public School was moved to the south of the church and now serves as a church hall.

(Continued)

# 8. Significance

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| Period  | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |   |   |  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics              | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian                                |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-     | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                              |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)<br>Black history |

**Specific dates** Circa 1900 **Builder/Architect**

check: Applicable Criteria:  A  B  C  D  
and/or  
Applicable Exception:  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Level of Significance:  national  state  local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The present, circa 1900 building of Asbury Methodist Church in Chesterville Forest appears to be the second building of one of the oldest black congregations in the county, though the first building was not located on the Chesterville Forest Road site. Martenet's 1860 map of Kent County shows an "African M.E." church on the old site, located west of Chesterville north of a sharp bend on the old Chesterville-Morgnac road. It is not known how long such a church might have been there, the details of the congregation's early history having been lost. The move was made because the center of the black population in the Chesterville area had shifted after the Civil War. Whereas before the war most of the area blacks lived and worked on farms around the village of Chesterville (until about 1848 called New Market), after the war they moved from the farms (though they continued to work there) and bought their own small plots of land where it was available, i.e. in the tracts considered unsuitable for farming, often heavily wooded. The community stretches along both sides of the Chesterville Forest road from south end at Route 291 to north end at the old Chesterville road, and slightly around the corner at both ends. The distance between the new community and the old church was more than two miles, felt to be too far for convenient, regular walking. Few community residents at the turn of the century had any other kind of transportation. The present building itself, both in form and materials used (many now covered), was a typical example of a small, frame, rural church of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Kent County. For over 80 years it has served as a focus of the community life of Chesterville Forest, particularly important during the years of segregation.

(Continued)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. K-619

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A            
 Zone Easting Northing

B            
 Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|       |      |        |      |

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|       |      |        |      |

# 11. Form Prepared By

|                 |                                       |           |             |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| name/title      | Margaret Q. Fallaw, Survey Consultant |           |             |
|                 | County Commissioners of Kent County   |           |             |
| organization    | Historical Society of Kent County     | date      | May 7, 1986 |
|                 | Courthouse                            |           | 778-4600    |
| street & number | Church Alley                          | telephone | 778-3499    |
| city or town    | Chestertown                           | state     | Maryland    |

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
 Shaw House  
 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 269-2438

The church's main section is small, only about 24 feet wide by 30 feet deep. The shallow rear gable-end projection is 40" deep by 9 feet wide, and the vestibule tower measures about 11-1/2 feet wide by 6 feet deep.

The quite tall walls are covered on the exterior by horizontal, lapped vinyl siding that was applied in 1985 over a brick- or stone-patterned asphalted panel siding. It had been applied circa 1950 over the original horizontal, lapped weatherboard. The new siding extends to or below ground level and is likely to lead to rotting of the substructure over the now unventilated crawl space. The foundation is said to be of brick piers, but they are not visible because of the low siding. Propped against a tree, having been removed for the re-siding, is a flat, plaque-type stone (not a cornerstone) that says "Asbury M. E. Mission Built Nov. 18, 1900."

There is a circa 17" square chimney on each long side, just west of the central bay. They were originally for stoves but now vent gas heaters. They are built of red common brick and rest on concrete footing pads. The south chimney has a two-course cap with a hood above resting on half-bricks at the corners. The taller north chimney has a clay flue extending above the two-course cap.

The main-section roof is gable and continuous with the roof of the vestibule tower. The rear end projection has a lower shed roof. Dark green asphalt shingles now cover all roofs. The main-section roof overhangs side and end walls about 10-12 inches. The cornice is now boxed with aluminum material (though it probably was not formerly, but either had rafters open on the underside or closed along their lower edges). The rafter ends are square-cut. White aluminum gutters are in place. Though the roof planes of main-section and tower roofs are continuous, the joint is obvious, perhaps because of settlement. It is possible that the tower is a later addition, though there is no such evidence on the interior at the entry level. The tower roof is finished in the same manner as the main-section roof and does have gutters. The rear projection has a small boxed cornice at the lower end of its shed roof but is flush at the ends.

The belfry atop the tower roof appears to have been independently constructed and has its own gable roof, with the ridge parallel to that of the main-section and tower roofs. The belfry is estimated as about 36" wide and 42" deep and about 50-55" tall. Its roof overhangs sides and ends about 8", and its edges are also closed along the undersides of the rafters. The belfry is enclosed with siding on all four sides. The bell is said to be in place within the belfry.

There is only the single, approach-end entry. It has a pair of replacement flush doors with oak-veneer (now delaminating) that is painted red on the exterior but has a clear finish on the interior. A photograph shows the previous doors to have had 2-over-2 panels. A large concrete pad in a semi-circular shape is outside the entry.

(continued)

The main-section side windows are double-hung. They are narrow and quite tall; the opening measures about 27" x 67". Lights are 2-over-2 in what appears to be replacement sash; the upper lights are clear and uncolored, and the lower obscure with a fine pattern. Most of the trim is vinyl-covered. The vestibule windows, one per side, are slightly wider, as are the main-section gable-end windows on each side of the vestibule. The chancel windows, one per side, are 4" shorter and narrower than the nave side windows.

On the interior, the vestibule has the same recent, short-length oak strip flooring as the nave. The rear projection is one step higher, with the carpeted platform beginning in the nave about 30" from the projection. Modern plywood panelling has been applied over the original wainscoting, said to have been of horizontal, beaded tongue-and-groove boards, the same material as is on the ceiling. In the nave the wainscoting boards are vertical and about 3" wide, to a height of about 46". There are a simple chair rail and plain apron. There is no baseboard, only a small quarter-round shoe. The upper walls have been sheetrocked. Between the vestibule and nave there are double swinging doors, each 24" wide and hung on cast, embossed hinges. Each has 2-over-2 panels. Jamb trim at these doors is 4-1/4" wide and plain, but the lintel trim is segmentally shaped and 8-1/2" high at the center. It echoes the shape of the opening to the "chancel" projection. The ceiling has been lowered about three feet to the level of the wall plates through a grid suspension system with 2' x 4' panels and integral lighting fixtures. Originally the ceiling was finished along the undersides of the lower rafters and tie beams. The interior window trim is 5-1/2" wide and plain.

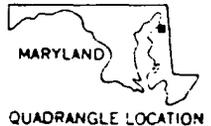
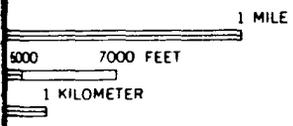
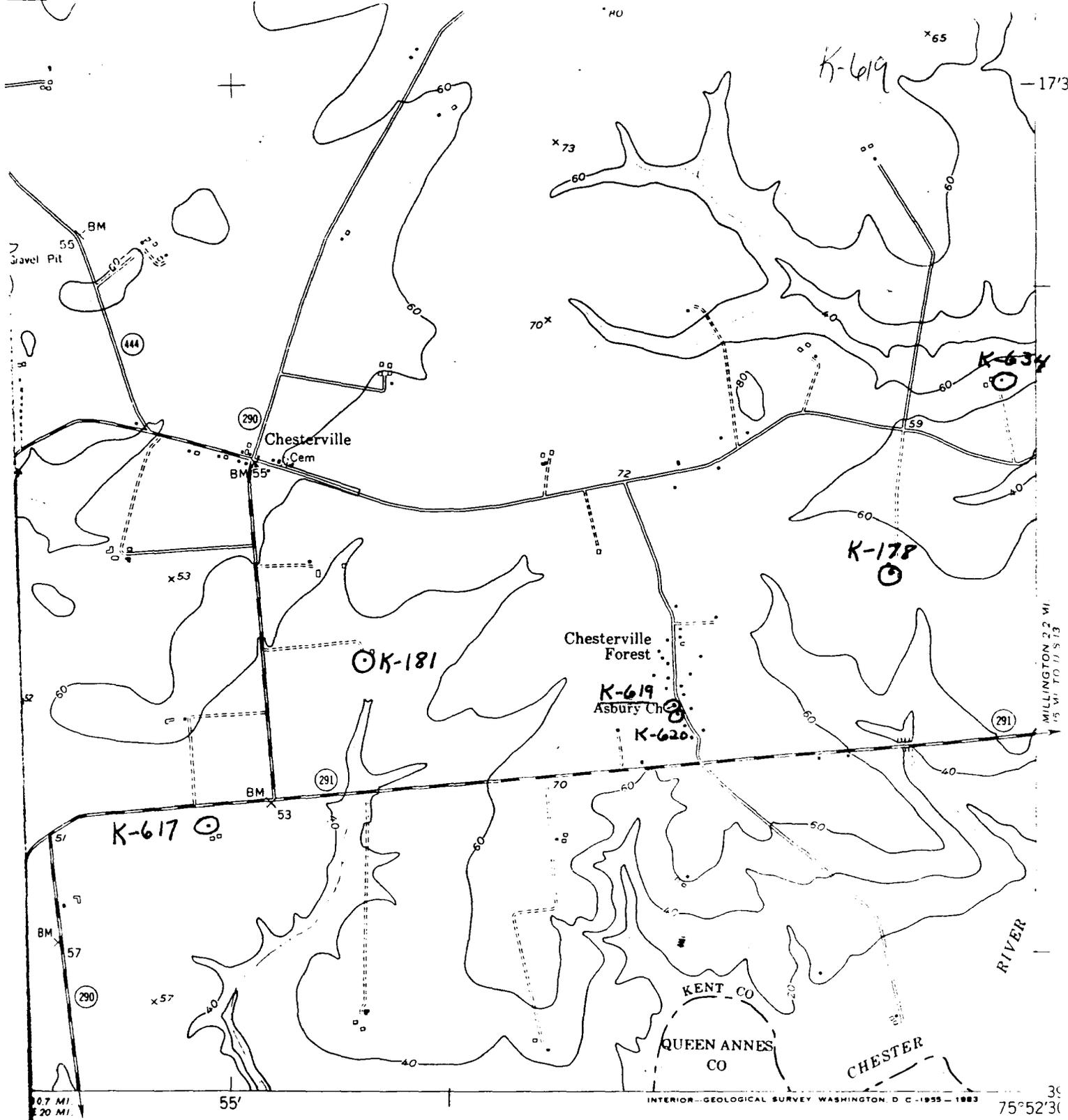
The pine pews, from the now-gone Davis Hill Methodist Church, are simple, with simply-shaped curvilinear ends. They have a rather unrefined, yellowish oak graining. The communion rail, lectern, and communion table are also from the Davis Hill church. They and the three "ecclesiastical" chairs in the rear projection have all been grained.

The wide opening to the "chancel" projection is segmentally arched. Its trim is wide and plain except for a central "keystone" enlargement with an applied set of three concentric squares in the lower center portion. At arch ends there are two-layer squares; they are not really corner blocks but applied on oddly-shaped beveled pieces at the corners. The opening's jambs are splayed. These details appear to be creations of the local carpenter, in consultation with church members involved with the building. At a time when much church decoration came from catalogues, this is somewhat unusual, but economy very likely was a major consideration.

The Chesterville Forest Methodist congregation is one of the county's oldest black congregations although its church site was located elsewhere until the present church was moved to the present site about 1900-1910. Martenet's 1860 map of Kent County shows a building at the old site, located west of Chesterville north of a sharp bend on the old Chesterville-Morgnec road. On that map it is designated "African M. E.," one of only several such churches mapped in the county. The details of the congregation's early history seem to have been lost.

The old church site, now a grove of trees, has the church's original cemetery. Since about 1964-65 the church has used a new cemetery, located at the south end of the Chesterville Forest road at Route 291, next to the VFW hall.

The deed for the present church property is dated October 2, 1909 (JTD 19/503); a deed for the old site could not be found. The land was purchased for \$30 in what was then called Chesterville Grove. The move was made because the center of the black population in the Chesterville area had shifted after the Civil War. Whereas before the war most of the area blacks lived and worked on farms around the village of Chesterville (until about 1848 called New Market), after the war they moved from the farms (though they continued to work there) and bought their own small plots of land where it was available, i.e. in the tracts considered unsuitable for farming, often heavily wooded. The community stretches along both sides of the Chesterville Forest road from south end at Route 291 to north end at the old Chesterville road, and slightly around the corner at both ends. The distance between the new community and the old church was more than two miles, felt to be too far for convenient, regular walking. Few community residents at the turn of the century had any other kind of transportation.



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

|             |  |                |                 |             |
|-------------|--|----------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Heavy-duty  |  | 4 LANE 16 LANE | Light-duty      |             |
| Medium-duty |  | 4 LANE 16 LANE | Unimproved dirt |             |
|             |  | U. S. Route    |                 | State Route |

**GALENA, MD.**  
 SW/4 CECILTON 15' QUADRANGLE  
 N3915-W7552.5/7.5  
 PHOTOINSPECTED 1974  
 1953



K-619

Asbury Methodist Church, Chesterville Forest  
Chesterville Forest, Rd., near Chesterville

M. Q. Fallaw - 5/7/86

View to southwest

K-619-4



K-619

Asbury Methodist Church, Chesterville Forest  
Chesterville Forest Rd., near Chesterville  
M. Q. Fallaw - 5/7/86  
View to southeast

K 619-2